



# Gorran Primary School

## PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

**It is the school's aim to always expect regular attendance. Regular and punctual attendance is vitally important in raising achievement and developing the potential of all pupils.**

### Introduction

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a legal requirement. Parents are responsible for ensuring that any child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. (The term parent throughout this policy also refers to carer or legal guardian). It is also essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them.

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. However, we do accept that serious illness is inevitable on some occasions. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

### The Role of Parents

Parents have a legal duty to make sure their child attends school regularly and that they arrive at school on time and are collected from school on time. It is the parent's responsibility to ring and inform the school by 9.15am if and why a pupil is absent and to provide any further information that the school needs. If no message has been received by 9.30am the school will phone the pupil's parent for confirmation of absence and reason.

### Leave of absence

Amendments to the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 stating that Head Teachers may not grant any absence for holidays during term time. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. Head Teachers will not be able to grant **any** leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'. It is the Head Teacher who determines the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. NAHT guidance on the definition of '**exceptional circumstances**' will be used (Appendix E).

**All** absences must be requested in writing to the Head Teacher in accordance with the School Policy (by completing Appendix A). This request **MUST** be made prior to the leave of absence (at least 2 weeks) and any commitment being made or it will result in an unauthorised absence.

Applications from parents to take their child on leave of absence during term time will be considered on each application. The Leave of Absence Calculation Chart (Appendix B) may be used to guide the Headteacher's decision, and in some cases the attendance Governors' decision, on whether or not to authorise the requested leave of absence. The following factors will apply:

- If the total score is 7 or more, this would indicate that a leave of absence would not normally be authorised. However, the Headteacher may be aware of 'exceptional circumstances' which would warrant approving leave of absence.
- If the Local Authority has begun legal proceedings, leave of absence should not be authorised.



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Parents should be made aware that any leave of absence which has not been agreed in advance will lead to the pupil being marked with unauthorised absences and that this may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action.

A letter confirming that the request has been authorised/denied will be sent to the parent (Appendix C/D).

Any permission given for a leave of absence will be on the understanding that the parent agrees to support their child in completion of a study pack provided by the class teacher during their absence. The parent must agree to administer the work, mark it and return it to school after the leave of absence.

The Local Authority works with us to reduce the numbers of children missing school and we can refuse parents' requests to take their child out of school. Any child who has 20 absences (10 days) or more unauthorised absences in one school year will automatically be referred to the Education Welfare Officer who could initiate court proceedings against the parent. If a pupil is taken out of school after their authorised absence request has been refused, the parent may be reported to the Education Welfare Officer. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue a fixed penalty notice of £60 (if paid within 21 days) or £120 (if paid within 28 days), or use court proceedings to prosecute parents. They could also seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

#### **Lateness**

Lateness is discouraged and a regular check will be made of this. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of others. If a pupil is marked late after registration has been taken (9.15am) it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The Headteacher will request a discussion or send a letter to the parents of any child who persistently arrives late.

#### **Absence due to medical reasons**

When a pupil is absent from school due to ill health; a letter, telephone call or a personal visit to the office is required. Medical appointments during school time are discouraged. Where this is not possible, parents are requested to opt for appointment times at the start or end of the day so that pupils do not miss a whole day of school. Parents must inform the school by letter, telephone call or a personal visit to the office. Parents are asked to collect children from school for such appointments as pupils are not permitted to leave the premises during the day unaccompanied. However, the school may allow older pupils to leave unaccompanied if permission is given in writing by the parent.

#### **Registers**

‘Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral and key part of the school day, as indeed was intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers. In this connection, Headteachers need to bear in mind that registers may be used as evidence in cases where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and that inappropriate authorisation of absences may compromise subsequent court proceedings.’

*The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (SI 2089)*

The register should be an accurate reflection of a pupil's attendance. The decision on whether or not to authorise a particular absence rests with the Headteacher. The class teacher will record attendance of the



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child at the start of the morning and the afternoon sessions. If the child fails to attend regularly or their attendance level falls below 90%, the parent will be informed by letter and may be invited for a meeting with the Headteacher.

The register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in court. Procedures for completing the register are as follows:

- Do not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when the register is called
- Do not leave any spaces in the register
- Do not allow pupils to mark the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly distinguishing between the original entry and the correction
- Mark pupils who are present a.m. and p.m.
- Mark pupils who are absent as O and use the absence codes in the front of the register if reason is known.
- Mark pupils who arrive late, after the register has been called but before 9.15am, as L
- Mark pupils who arrive after 9.20am, when the register is closed, as U

**Adopted November 2013  
Amended November 2014**



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Appendix A – leave of absence request

**FORM TO BE RETURNED TO SCHOOL WITH A MINIMUM OF TWO WEEKS NOTICE**

Absence may be granted where ‘exceptional circumstances’ are demonstrated. Please ensure you detail below the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for requesting to take your child out of school and attach supporting documents where appropriate.

Name of Pupil: .....	Date of Birth..... Class/Tutor Group.....
Leave of absence requested from date:..... to date.....	
Number of schools days that your child will be absent from school: .....	
Do you have a sibling request in another school? If so, please state which school: .....	
Reason for leave of absence request (please detail the <b>exceptional</b> reasons why are you requesting to take your child out of school). Continue on a separate sheet if necessary: ..... ..... .....	
Name of Parent /Carer: .....	
Signature: .....	Date: .....

Absences which have not been agreed will be marked as unauthorised absences; these may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action.

**For School Use:** UPN..... Attendance %.....

Previous leave of absence this Academic Year      Yes/No\*

No. of days: .....

Arrange to meet with parent/carers      Yes/No\*

Headteacher’s signature ..... Coding B H O P



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### Appendix B

#### Leave of Absence Authorisation Calculation Chart - to be used as a guide when making decisions

Name of Pupil: ..... UPN: .....		
The merits of each individual request should be evaluated by providing answers to ALL the following questions and scoring accordingly.		
	Points Possible	Points
When is the leave of absence planned for?	September = 2pts April, May and June = 2pts Jan & Nov (Roseland CC only) = 2pts Other dates = 1pt	
Pupil's attendance level is?  (Up until Autumn half term use the % figure from the previous year.)	Less than 70% = 7pts 70% to 85% = 6pts 85% to 90% = 5pts 90% to 94.5% = 4pts More than 94.5% = 2pts	
How close is the pupil to a SATs assessment or other examination?	Non-SATs/Exam Year = 1pt SATs /Exam Year = 3pts Less than 2 weeks before = 4pts	
How much leave of absence has already been taken in the current academic year?	8 or more days = 4pts 5 to 7 days = 3pts 3 to 4 days = 2pts 1 to 2 days = 1pt	
<b>Subtotal</b>		
Any exceptional circumstances which indicate that the leave of absence should be authorised.		- 2pts
Any exceptional circumstances which indicate that the leave of absence should not be authorised.		+ 2pts
Details of exceptional circumstances: .....		
.....		
<b>Total</b>		
<p>If the total is 7 or more, leave of absence should not normally be authorised.</p> <p>If, in the opinion of the Head Teacher, there are exceptional circumstances (incl. religious and cultural considerations) add comment in the box above.</p> <p>If the Local Authority has begun legal proceedings leave of absence should <b>NOT</b> be authorised.</p> <p><b>CIRCLE WHERE APPROPRIATE:- REQUEST APPROVED / REQUEST DENIED</b></p>		
Completed by.....		Date.....



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**Appendix C**

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Dear

Thank you for your recent leave of absence request form.

I am able to confirm that your child's leave of absence has been authorised from *date* to *date*.

Requests for leave are never taken lightly and in taking this decision I have considered *name of pupil* overall level of attendance, the nature of your exceptional circumstances and the impact any leave may have on statutory tests.

Please contact the school to discuss a possible study pack or project outline that *child's name* can complete whilst away.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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## Appendix D

### Gorran School

Dear

Thank you for your recent leave of absence request form.

On this occasion I am not able to authorise your child's leave of absence from *date* to *date*.

I do not feel that there are 'exceptional' reasons why this leave should be authorised and my first concern has to be the educational development of *pupil name*. Requests for leave of absence are never taken lightly and in taking this decision I have considered *name of pupil* overall level of attendance, the nature of your exceptional circumstances and the impact any leave may have on statutory tests. Unfortunately, because of *their previous attendance levels, the unexceptional nature of your request, the proximity to SATs*, the leave cannot be authorised.

If you decide to go ahead with your leave of absence, *pupil name* absences will be marked as unauthorised. I should inform you that unauthorised absences are referred to the Local Authority who may, under certain circumstances, consider issuing you with a Penalty Notice or other legal action in relation to unauthorised absences.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please feel free to make an appointment to see me.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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### **Appendix E**

On 10/11/2014 the Governors agreed to use this guidance, especially where it touches on the definition of 'exceptional circumstances'

## **NAHT Guidance on authorised absence in schools**

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time. We believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. This guidance has no statutory authority and is not imposed upon schools.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
7. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
8. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
9. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
10. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
11. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.
12. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

October 2014